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9 August 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT : The SEACOORD Debate

REFERENCE: [REDACTED]

1. The referenced cable should be read in conjunction with the State Department account of the SEACOORD meeting, transmitted as Saigon Embtel 2203 [REDACTED] which we are keeping for you and which is attached herewith.

2. The CINCPAC message which General Wheeler reported in HONOLULU 5758 is replete with cryptonyms. For your information, these cryptonyms refer to the following operations:



3. Three of the principals in the SEACOORD debate have quite different objectives and frames of reference:

a. Sullivan is dead set against expansion of US or Vietnamese military action in Laos, partly because he believes this will complicate his relations with Souvanna and primarily because he believes this will antagonize the

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Soviets and diminish the chances of ^{their} ~~the~~ playing a constructive role in any eventual negotiated settlement of the Vietnamese problem. A tertiary consideration which is present, though he would not admit it, is that any expansion of the US military presence in Laos would diminish his sphere of what he conceives as his pro-consular authority. (Thus Sullivan is really opposed to both the barrier concept itself, or at least the Laotian portions thereof, and particularly opposed to Westmoreland's desire to use US and Vietnamese troops in Laos on a major scale.)

b. Westmoreland wants to move into Laos with US forces. In present discussions he is cameling, i. e., getting his nose under the tent. The humps [] i. e., divisional-sized operations and [] i. e., corps-sized operations) will soon follow. Westmoreland is too smart a politician to buck the barrier but really doesn't like it, and would rather utilize the assets devoted thereto to ground operations.

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c. The JCS, reflecting McNamara, is supporting the barrier. McNamara's hope is that the barrier will work well enough to make a radical reconsideration of bombing policy feasible. To achieve this end, McNamara is willing to support whatever level of US and Vietnamese troop involvement in Laos is required to enhance the barrier's chances of success.

4. Sullivan is on a collision course with Westmoreland and, for somewhat different reasons, likely to be steam-rollered from Washington on the barrier issue. We run the risk of being the squash ball in this three-cornered game. Sullivan is touting our operations in Laos to demonstrate that what Westmoreland wants to do is not really necessary. To some extent, he is advertising more than we can deliver. We do not, for example, really have a paramilitary force [] in the Laotian Panhandle. We do have some form of association with [] in southern Laos, but these are not by any means all fighting troops that General Shalek can deploy on Field Marshall Sullivan's command. Westmoreland knows this and, in fact, knows considerably more about our Laotian operations than he was apparently willing to admit at the SEACORD meeting.

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5. FE Division and this office believe that while we must do everything the Agency can to support US policy, we should not fight Ambassador Sullivan's political battles. Although we have agreed to provide him with a liaison officer [] our officer should not attempt to fulfill the planning function referred to by implication in the final sentence of paragraph 1E of the referenced cable. This officer should be a senior State Department man, and it should be he who constitutes the tip of Sullivan's lance.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachments

[] (IN 28060), 9 August 1967
State Saigon 2203 [] 1 August 1967

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